

Joy in Prayer

Philippians 1:1-11

July 3, 2011

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A. Introduction

1. C. S. Lewis wrote many books and articles

- a. I wouldn't expect, or even want, you to agree with some of the things he has written
- b. like Job puzzling about his problem of pain in the face of his orthodox friends, Lewis wrestled through many of the problems of Christianity, making tentative conclusions along the way
- c. so you will never leave off reading him without having your thinking provoke on some great Christian theme
- d. One of his books, published after his death in 1963, is a record of his half of correspondence^{—{2}} with a friend named Malcolm along with his wife, Betty.
- e. at one point the subject under discussion is the difficulty of settling down to prayer, and Lewis writes,
—{3}.

(A) On the present point (Betty) is right. I am making very heavy weather of what most believers find a very simple matter. What is more natural, and easier, if you believe in God, than to address Him? How could one not?

(B) Yes. But it depends who one is. For those in my position – adult converts ... – that simplicity and spontaneity can't always be the starting point. One can't just jump back into one's childhood.

(C) does that ring a bell with you? Oh! the sentence prayer in the midst of a difficulty may be easy enough, but to go to earnest prayer in a quiet time can be hard.

- f. later, Lewis and Malcolm, take up another aspect of this^{—{4}}.

(A) Well, let's now at any rate come clean. Prayer is irksome. An excuse to omit it is never unwelcome. When it is over, this casts a feeling of relief and holiday over the rest of the day. We are reluctant to begin. We are delighted to finish. While we are at prayer, but not while we are reading a novel or solving a cross-word puzzle, any trifle is enough to distract us.

(B) And we know that we are not alone in this. The fact that prayers are constantly set as penances tells its own tale

(C) again, I think that this is a fairly universal experience among believers

2. Yet Paul does not seem to have had these concerns
 - a. in his letters he frequently bursts out into prayer – in their salutation, in their body, in their final greetings
 - b. and he does so with joy, as he says in verse 4: *'always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all'*
 - c. why does he have such joy? It is instructive to consider
 - (A) those to whom he is writing, for whom he is praying
 - (B) his attitude behind his praying for them
 - (C) and the content of his requests for them

B. Paul's Letter's Readers 1:1-2

1. Their mailing addresses, verse 1: *Paul and Timothy, bond-slaves of Christ Jesus to all the saints in Christ Jesus to those being in Philippi, along with bishops and deacons;*
 - a. Pastor Carlos and Nicole have two mailing addresses: one is at their home in Newmarket, the other is a post office box for their church and Jewish ministry mail
 - b. those to whom Paul is writing have two addresses as well
 - c. one of those was their residence in that Roman garrison city of Philippi at the head of the Aegean Sea
 - d. the other was that of saints – those set apart, sanctified – resident in Jesus Christ – along with their spiritual leaders
 - e. every believer here this morning has likewise two addresses with the one being Aurora, Newmarket, &c, and the other is in heaven. in Christ Jesus
 - f. Paul is ever mindful that the Christian though spiritually entitled to heaven, is a resident in this world with all of its difficulties and with all of their shortcomings: he asks God for ...
2. Their well-being, verse 2: *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - a. Grace and peace are intimately connected with salvation
 - (A) Grace is that unmerited favour of God toward men in the sending of His Son to the cross to forgive our sin
 - (B) and if grace is the source of salvation, then peace is the river that flows out from it, *'Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,'* (Romans

5:1)

- b. yet Paul is not wishing on their behalf that they have salvation over and over – Christ did that once on the cross – but rather that God keep these in their possession
- c. that the freshness of the realization of salvation might renew itself in their lives every day
- d. Paul takes great joy in the joy he desires for them

C. Paul's Attitude in Prayer for Them. 1:3-8

1. the importance of attitude

- a. most of us recognize the importance of attitude
 - (A) if the person that you are dealing with in a store or on the telephone shows by their attitude that they care about helping you with your problem, what a joy!
 - (B) if you in dealing with them show by your attitude that you appreciate their help, what a pleasure for them!
- b. our attitude to those for whom we are praying will be reflected in our attitude towards God as we pray
 - (A) if we complain about them, we will complain to God
 - (B) if we are thankful to them, we will give thanks to God
- c. in verses 3-8 Paul expresses many positive aspects of his attitude toward the saints living in Philippi; we will just touch on some of them

2. Grateful remembrance, verse 3: **I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,**

- a. it wasn't that he went through one by one collecting up all his memories of this church at Philippi: of Lydia coming to Christ at the prayer meeting by the river, of the Philippian jailer washing their wounds after the prison-break, &c
- b. but looking back upon his entire experience with them all
- c. he was grateful to God for knowing them
- d. were they perfect? no; were they without fault? no; but the grace they showed overwhelmed any such memory by Paul
- e. our prayer for others will be far more joyous if deliberately we choose to forget their minor annoyings and we choose to remember the blessing they bring to us

3. Joyous prayer, verse 4: **at all times in my every supplication on behalf of you all, with joy making supplication,**
 - a. Supplication is a translation of one of the words in this passage for prayer: it is a narrower word, more specific; it is prayer for those things that are needed
 - b. this is earnest prayer; this is intense prayer
 - c. this is prayer that is not easy, requiring perseverance
 - d. this is prayer that stresses our emotions; heartfelt
 - e. but sandwiched in this verse – it actually comes in an emphatic position in the Greek, although most translations put it at the end where it sounds better in English is the attitudinal phrase, **'with joy'**
 - f. this struggling and wrestling in prayer on their behalf, Paul approaches with an attitude of deliberate joy – joy which is the undertone of this whole letter; for this he considers ...

4. Serving relationship, verse 5: **on the basis of your participation unto the gospel from the first days, until this very present moment,**
 - a. Paul is joyful to take this pain of praying on their behalf because he can look back over their whole Christian lives spent in taking pain with him on behalf of the ministry of the gospel in which they have been jointly engaged
 - b. that word participation is often translated 'fellowship' but fellowship has come to mean in evangelical circles something far different than what it meant in King James' day and in the Bible; now it means 'companionship between individuals' but then 'being engaged in a common interest and activity' – it meant working together
 - c. at what did they work together? **'unto the gospel'** – the word 'unto' is an action preposition, implying movement – they were involved in moving the gospel forward
 - d. Paul prayed not with an attitude of 'I...you' but of 'we' – it wasn't Paul the great missionary and then the poor converts, but rather 'we who together spread the gospel'
 - e. pray for others with the attitude of being fellow-servants of the one Lord and Christ, Jesus

5. Trustful assurance, verse 6: **having been convinced of this same thing, that He who began in you a good work will bring it to completion up until the day of Christ Jesus;**
 - a. Paul has this assurance respecting the Philippians

- b. God has worked; God is working; God will work
- c. the present state of our fellow believers with whom we work is not the same as it once was, nor of what it will be
- d. that believer, who was once dead in trespasses and sins, who became a babe in Christ has, if we stop and reflect, grown from that point until now by the Holy Spirit's work
- e. nor will they always be – if I can pursue an analogy – a troublesome juvenile, but will grow in time to maturity
- f. being perfected when Jesus Christ returns – and we spend eternity with Him, and, with them! Be assured of this.

6. Gracious co-operation, verse 7: **Even as it is fitting for me to have this opinion for your sake because I have you in my heart (or, you have me in your heart), even in my bonds both in the defence and the confirmation of the gospel, you all are my fellow partakers of grace.**

- a. the grace that is spoken of in this verse is not the grace that Paul has to others, but that which Paul had received
- b. now Paul writes as Caesar's prisoner – not politically wise to be his partner – but they were sticking it out
- c. showing that they too had received the same grace as he
- d. small wonder then that he felt for them a ...

7. Yearning affection, verse 8: **For God is my witness, how I earnestly long for you with the affection of Christ Jesus.**

- a. in Paul's day, the seat of the affection was considered to be the stomach, lungs and heart – many a young woman or man has found love hits him in a nervous stomach, faster breathing and beating heart! – or, in the AV, 'bowels'
- b. if we stop and think through these things, as Paul has done, then we, too, shall be moved with affection for them, the proper attitude to bring us to prayer with joy

D. Paul's Requests in Prayer for Them 1:9-11
 1. the importance of content

- a. James tells us 'You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.' (James 4:3)
 - b. all too often our prayers concentrate on Garth's knee, or Aunt Matilda's bunion, with perhaps a plea for the lost thrown in – Paul's prayer is for spiritual blessing
 - c. that doesn't mean that prayer for physical healing is not valid – James also says, 'Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.' (James 5:16) – but even there the spiritual need is paramount and the priority
 - d. I am going to sum up the content of Paul's prayer for the spiritual growth of the saints at Philippi, the Christians who read this letter then and now, in an agricultural picture, a picture that may help you to remember and to apply it^{5}.
2. The seed and blades, verse 9: **And this I am praying: that your love may grow still more and more abundant in knowledge and in all moral perception,**
- a. growth comes from a seed: in the Christian life, that seed is love; '... because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.' (Romans 5:5)
 - b. from that seed springs two twin blades: knowledge and moral perception;
 - (A) to grow as Christians we need to know our Lord Jesus better and better, and with that know His truth
 - (B) then the translation of that knowledge into a life that shuns evil and seeks good
 - c. pray for believers that the seed of love may grow into the twin blades of knowledge and discernment; next, there is
3. The upright stalk, verse 10: **in order that you may prove the things that really matter, that you may be sincere and inoffensive unto the day of Christ,**
- a. this goes beyond choosing right from wrong, to the ability and practice of choosing what is spiritually best
 - b. this is the way that leads to purity or sincerity, to keep from being a stumbling block to others either in seeking Christ or in their walk with the Lord
 - c. pray for believers that they seek God's best for their lives

4. The final fruit and harvest, verse 11: **having been made full of fruit of righteousness which is through Jesus Christ, with a view to the glory and praise of God.**
 - a. the final fruit are those which proceed from a life that is right before God and man – not the self-righteousness of prideful works,
 - (A) but those which proceed from the new life which we have by the Holy Spirit's work
 - (B) that come because we have been made acceptable to God by being clothed in the righteousness of Christ
 - b. the harvest of this growth from the seed of love that produces knowledge and discernment, the choice of God's best in a persons' life, the rightful living – the harvest is glory and praise to God
 - c. for these things, there is joy in our prayer, as we pray for one another – because in these we know that we pray in the will of God

E. Conclusion

1. so here Paul describes the attitude that we should have in praying for our fellow-Christians and for what we should pray in upholding them in the spiritual journey; to do so with joy
2. as the disciples asked, Teach me O Lord, to pray.

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of my favourite commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870

EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan
Volume 11, including Philippians, by Homer A. Kent, Jr

EGT – The Expositor’s Greek Testament, Philippians by H. A. A. Kennedy, Hodder & Stoughton, 1903

Kerux – The sermon and illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick to be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com.

Moule – The Epistle to the Philippians, by H. C. G. Moule, 1873 (and his commentaries on other epistles)

Motyer – Philippians Studies, The Richness of Christ, by J. A. Motyer; Inter-Varsity Press, 1966

Wuest – Philippians in the Greek New Testament by Kenneth S. Wuest, © 1942 Wm B Eerdmans

2. C. S. Lewis, Letters to Malcolm; Chiefly on Prayer, Geoffrey Bless Ltd, 1964

3. Lewis, Chapter 15, p 103

4. Lewis, Chapter 21, p 145

5. From Motyer, *in loc*.